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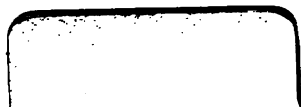
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TO

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DANIEL WEBSTER.

New York, FEBRUARY 24, 1852.



ADDRESS.

THE object of your Association, Gentlemen, like that of others of similar character, is highly important. Historical Societies are auxiliary to Historical compositions. They collect the materials from which the great narrative of events is, in due time, to be framed. The transactions of public bodies, local histories, memoirs of all kinds, statistics, laws, ordinances, public debates and discussions, works of periodical literature, and the public journals, whether of political events, of commerce, literature, or the arts, all find their places in the collections of Historical Societies. But these collections are not history ; they are only elements of history. History is a higher name, and imports literary productions of the first order.

It is presumptuous in me, whose labors and studies have been so long devoted to other objects, to speak in the presence of those whom I see before me, of the *dignity and importance of History*, in its just sense ; and yet I find pleasure in breaking in upon the course of daily pursuits, and indulging, for a time, in reflections upon topics of literature, and in the remembrance of the great examples of historic art.

Well written history must always be the result of genius and taste, as well as of research and study.

It stands next to Epic poetry, among the productions of the human mind. If it requires less of invention than that, it is not behind it in dignity and importance. The province of the Epic is the poetical narrative of real or supposed events, and the representation of real, or at least natural, characters; and History, in its noblest examples, is an account of occurrences, in which great events are commemorated, and distinguished men appear as agents and actors. Epic poetry and the Drama are but narratives, the former partly, and the latter wholly, in the form of dialogue; but their characters and personages are usually, in part at least, the creations of the imagination.

Severe history sometimes assumes the dialogue, or dramatic form, and, without departing from truth, is embellished by supposed colloquies or speeches, as in the productions of that great master, Titus Livius, or that greater master still, Thucydides.

The drawing of characters, consistent with general truth and fidelity, is no violation of historical accuracy; it is only an illustration or an ornament.

When Livy ascribes an appropriate speech to one of his historical personages, it is only as if he had portrayed the same character in language professedly his own. Lord Clarendon's presentation, in his own words, of the character of Lord Falkland, one of the highest and most successful efforts of personal description, is hardly different from what it would have been, if he had put into the mouth of Lord Falkland, a speech exhibiting the same qualities of the mind and the heart, the same opinions, and the same attachments. Homer describes the actions of personages, which, if not real, are so imagined as to be conformable to the general

characteristics of men in the heroic ages. If his relation be not historically true, it is such, nevertheless, as, making due allowance for poetical embellishment, might have been true. And in Milton's great Epic, which is almost entirely made up of narratives and speeches, there is nothing repugnant to the general conception which we form of the characters of those, whose sentiments and conduct he portrays.

But History, while it illustrates and adorns, confines itself to facts, and to the relation of actual events. It is not far from truth to say, that well written and classic History is the Epic of real life. It places the actions of men in an attractive and interesting light. Rejecting what is improper and superfluous, it fills its picture with real, just, and well drawn images.

The dignity of History consists in reciting events with truth and accuracy, and in presenting human agents and their actions, in an interesting and instructive form. The first element in History, therefore, is truthfulness; and this truthfulness must be displayed in a concrete form. Classical History is not a memoir. It is not a crude collection of acts, occurrences, and dates. It adopts nothing that is not true; but it does not embrace all minor truths and all minor transactions. It is a composition, a production, which has unity of design, like a work of statuary or of painting, and keeps constantly in view one great end or result. Its parts, therefore, are to be properly adjusted and well proportioned. The historian is an artist, as true to fact as other artists are to nature, and, though he may sometimes embellish, he never misrepresents; he may occasionally, perhaps, color too highly, but the truth is still visible through the lights and shades. This unity of design seems es-

sential to all great productions. With all the variety of the Iliad, Homer had the wrath of Achilles, and its consequences, always before him ; when he sang of the exploits of other heroes, they were silently subordinated to those of the son of Thetis. Still more remarkable is the unity in variety of the Odyssey, the character of which is much more complicated ; but all the parts are artfully adapted to each other, and they have a common centre of interest and action, the great end being the restoration of Ulysses to his native Ithaca. Virgil, in the Æneid, sang of nothing but the man, and his deeds, who brought the Trojan gods to Italy, and laid the foundation of the walls of imperial Rome ; and Milton of nothing, but

“ Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woes.”

And the best historical productions of ancient and of modern times, have been written with equal fidelity to one leading thought or purpose.

It has been said by Lord Bolingbroke, that “ History is Philosophy teaching by example ;” and, before Bolingbroke, Shakspeare has said :

“ There is a history in all men’s lives,
Figuring the nature of the times deceased :
The which observed, a man may prophecy,
With a near aim, of the main chance of things,
As yet not come to life ; which in their
Seeds, and weak beginnings, lie entreasured.
Such things become the hatch and brood of time ;
And, by the necessary form of this,
King Richard might create a perfect guess,

That great Northumberland then false to him,
 Would, of that seed, grow to a greater falseness ;
 Which should not find a ground to rest upon,
 Unless on you.

Are these things then necessities ?
 Then let us meet them like necessities."

And a wiser man than either Bolingbroke or Shakspeare, has declared :

" The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done, is that which shall be done ; and there is no new thing under the sun."

These sayings are all just, and they proceed upon the idea that the essential characteristics of human nature are the same everywhere, and in all ages.

This, doubtless, is true ; and so far as History presents the general qualities and propensities of human nature, it does teach by example. Bolingbroke adds, with remarkable power of expression, that " the school of example is the world : and the masters of this school are history and experience."

But the character of man varies so much, from age to age, both in his individual and collective capacity ; there comes such a change of circumstances, so many new objects of desire and aversion, and so many new and powerful motives spring up in his mind, that the conduct of men, in one age, or under one state of circumstances, is no sure and precise indication of what will be their conduct, when times and circumstances alter ; so that the example of the past, before it can become a useful instructor to the present, must be reduced to elementary principles in human nature, freed from the influence of conditions which were temporary

and have changed, and applied to the same principles, under new relations, with a different degree of knowledge, and the impulses arising from the altered state of things. A savage has the passions of ambition, revenge, love and glory ; and ambition and love, revenge and the hope of renown, are also elements in the character of civilized life ; but the development of these passions, in a state of barbarism, hardly instructs us as to the manner in which they will exhibit themselves in a cultivated period of society.

And so it is of religious sentiment and feeling. I believe man is everywhere, more or less, a religious being ; that is to say, in all countries, and at all times, he feels a tie which connects him with an Invisible Power.

It is true, indeed, and it is a remarkable fact in the history of mankind, that in the very lowest stage of human existence, and in the opposite extreme of high civilization, surrounded with everything luxurious in life, and with all the means of human knowledge, the idea of an unseen and supreme Governor of the Universe is most likely to be equally doubted or disregarded.

The lowest stage of human culture, that of mere savage existence, and the intellectual and refined atheism, exhibited in our own day, seem to be strangely coincident in this respect ; though it is from opposite causes and influences that men, in these so different conditions, are led to doubt or deny the existence of a Supreme Power. But both these are exceptions to the general current of human thought, and to the general conviction of our nature.

Man is naturally religious ; but then his religion

takes its character from his condition, his degree of knowledge, and his associations; and thus, it is true that the religious feeling, which operates in one state of society, and under one degree of light and knowledge, is not a safe example, to prove its probable influence under circumstances essentially different. So that, when we regard history as our instructor, in the development of the perceptions and character of men, and in the motives which actuate them, there comes a concomitant rush of altered circumstances, which are all to be considered and regarded.

History, therefore, is an example which may teach us the general principles of human nature, but does not instruct us greatly in its various possible developments.

What Dr. Johnson said, in his comparison of Dryden and Pope, is not inapplicable to this topic, "Dryden," said he, "knew more of man in his general nature, and Pope in his local manners." Dryden's sentiments, therefore, are the exemplar of human nature in general, Pope's of human nature as modified in particular relations and circumstances; and what is true of individual man, in this respect, is true, also, of society and government.

The love of liberty, for instance, is a passion or sentiment, which existed in intense force in the Grecian Republics, and in the better ages of Rome. It exists now, chiefly, and first of all, on that portion of the Western Continent in which we live. Here, it burns with heat and with splendor beyond all Grecian and all Roman example. It is not a light in the temple of Minerva, it is not the vestal flame of Rome; it is the light of the sun, it is the illumination of all the con-

stellations. Earth, air, and ocean, and all the heavens above us, are filled with its glorious shining; and, although the passion and the sentiment are the same, yet, he who would reason from Grecian liberty, or from Roman freedom, to our intelligent American liberty, would be holding a farthing candle to the orb of day.

The magnificent funeral oration of Pericles, over those who fell in the Peloponnesian war, is one of the grandest productions of antiquity. It contains sentiments and excites emotions, congenial to the minds of all lovers of liberty, in all regions and at all times. It exhibits a strong and ardent attachment to country, which true patriots always feel; an undaunted courage in its defence, and willingness to pledge and hazard all, for the maintenance of liberty. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of quoting a few passages from that celebrated address, in a translation, which I think much closer to the original Greek than that of Smith :

“ I shall begin first with our ancestors, to whom it is at once just and becoming on such an occasion as the present, that this honor of our commemoration should be paid; for the country which was ever their own home, they have handed down in the line of their successors to the present day, free through their valor. Both they indeed are worthy of our praise and still more our own fathers; for, having in addition to what they inherited, acquired, not without hardship, the dominion which we possess, they have transmitted it to us.

“ The greater portion of it indeed we ourselves, who are yet at the meridian of life, have still further augmented, till we have placed the city in all things in such a state of preparation that it is all sufficient in itself for war and for peace.

“ The warlike deeds by which all this has been effected, either by ourselves or by our fathers, in strenuously resisting the invasions, whether of barbarians or of Greeks, I omit, not wishing to enlarge upon them before the well informed; but by what conduct we have come to this condition,

by what policy and by what manners these great results have been brought about, these I will set forth before the eulogy of the deceased, deeming these things not inappropriate to be spoken on this occasion ; and that it will be beneficial to the whole assembly of strangers and citizens to listen to them.

“ For we enjoy a form of Government not emulating the laws of neighboring States, being ourselves rather a model to others than copying from them. It has been called by the name of DEMOCRACY, as being the government not of the few but of the majority. It secures to all, under the laws, equality in their private controversies,—in proportion as a citizen is in any respect in good repute, he is preferred above others, not more on account of the class to which he may belong than his own merit ; while, on the other hand as to poverty, no one qualified to serve the State is prevented from doing so by the obscurity of his condition. We perform our public duties on these liberal principles ; and as to mutual supervision in reference to the daily course of life, we take no offence at our neighbor for following his own inclination, nor do we subject ourselves to the annoyance of austerities which are painful, if not injurious. In this panegyric of the state of things in Athens, there is a constant, though tacit contrast with the Spartan institutions and character.

“ While our private intercourse, therefore, is without offence in our public concerns, we mainly fear to act illegally, ever obeying the magistrates for the time being and the laws, especially such of them as are passed for the protection of the oppressed, and such, though unwritten, as cannot be broken without acknowledged shame.

* * * * *

“ Having displayed our power in noble manifestations, and most assuredly not without witnesses, we shall be the admiration of the present age and of posterity, not needing in addition the eulogy of Homer, or of any other poet, whose descriptions will charm the ear at the time, but whose conception of deeds is at variance with the truth ; but having forced every sea and every land to be accessible to our enterprise, and having everywhere planted, together with our settlements, eternal monuments of injuries and of benefits. Combatting, therefore, generously for such a city, and thinking it unjust that it should be wrested from them, these men laid down their lives ; and, of those who survive, it behooves every one to be willing to labor and suffer for it.

* * * * *

“ Such, then, as it became the city, were the departed. As for those who

remain, you may desire indeed a safer career, but you must not deign to cherish a spirit in any degree less resolute toward the enemy ;—having regard not merely to the words of persons not wiser than yourselves, who may harangue you upon the honor of gallant resistance to the foe, but rather daily contemplating indeed the power of the State, till you become enamored of it ; and when you have come to perceive its greatness, reflecting that brave men knowing their duty, and in their deeds shrinking from dishonor, have achieved it ;—men who even, though they might fail in an enterprise, still felt that they ought not to deprive the country of the benefit of their valor, but lavished upon it the most precious offering. Thus giving their lives to the public, they received individually the praise that grows not old, and a most distinguished sepulchre, not so much that in which their bodies lie, as that in which their glory,—on every occasion of word or deed,—shall be left in everlasting remembrance.

“For of illustrious men the whole Earth is the sepulchre, and not the inscription alone of columns in their native land indicates it, but in countries also not their own, the unwritten memory which abides with every man of the spirit more than the deed.

“Emulous of men like these, do you also, placing your happiness in liberty, and your liberty in courage, shun no warlike dangers in defence of your country.”

How terse, how Doric, how well considered is the style of this unsurpassed oration ! Gentlemen, does not every page, paragraph, and sentence of what I have read, go home to all our hearts, carrying a most gratified consciousness of its resemblance to what is near and dear to us in our own native land ? Is it Athens, or America ? Is Athens or America the theme of these immortal strains ? Was Pericles speaking of his own country, as he saw it or knew it ; or, was he gazing upon a bright vision, then two thousand years before him, which we see in reality, as he saw it in prospect ?

But the contests of Sparta and Athens, what were they in lasting importance, and in their bearing on the destinies of the world, in comparison with that ever

memorable struggle which separated the American Colonies from the dominion of Europe? How different the result, which betided Athens, from that which crowned the glorious efforts of our ancestors; and, therefore, this renowned oration of Pericles, what is it in comparison with an effort of historical eloquence, which should justly set forth the merits of the heroes and the martyrs of the American revolution?

The Liberty of Athens, and of the other Grecian Republics, being founded in pure democracy, without any principle of representation, was fitted only for small States. The exercise of popular power in a purely democratic form, cannot be spread over countries of large extent; because, in such countries all cannot assemble in the same place, to vote directly upon laws and ordinances, and other public questions. But the principle of representation is expansive; it may be enlarged, if not infinitely, yet indefinitely, to meet new occasions, and embrace new regions. While, therefore, the love of liberty was the same, and its general principle the same, in the Grecian Republics as with us, yet not only were the forms essentially different, but that also was wanting, which we have been taught to consider as indispensable to its security: that is, a fixed, settled, definite, fundamental law, or constitution, imposing limitations, and restraints, equally on governors, and governed. We may, therefore, inhale all the fullness and freshness of the Grecian spirit, but we necessarily give its development a different form, and subject it to new modifications.

But history is not only philosophy, teaching by example; its true purpose is, also, to illustrate the general

progress of society in knowledge and the arts, and the changes of manners and pursuits of men.

There is an imperfection, both in ancient and modern histories, and those of the best masters, in this respect. While they recite public transactions, they omit, in a great degree, what belongs to the civil, social, and domestic progress of men and nations. There is not, so far as I know, a good civil history of Rome, nor is there an account of the manners and habits of social and domestic life, such as may inform us of the progress of her citizens, from the foundation of the city to the time of Livy and Sallust, in individual exhibitions of character.

We know, indeed, something of the private pursuits and private vices of the Roman people at the commencement of the Empire, but we obtain our knowledge of these chiefly from the severe and indignant rebukes of Sallust, and the inimitable satires of Juvenal. Wars, foreign and domestic, the achievements of arms, and national alliances fill up the recorded greatness of the Roman Empire.

It is very remarkable that, in this respect, Roman Literature is far more deficient than that of Greece. Aristophanes, and other Grecian comic writers, have scenes richly filled with the delineation of the lives and manners of their own people. But the Roman imitators of the Grecian stage gave themselves up to the reproduction of foreign characters on their own stage, and presented in their dramas Grecian manners also, instead of Roman manners. How much wiser was Shakespeare, who enchaind the attention of his audiences, and still enchains the attention of the whole Teutonic race, by the presentation of English manners and English History ?

Falstaff, Justice Shallow, and Dogberry, are not shrubs of foreign growth transplanted into the pages of Shakspeare, but genuine productions of the soil, the creations of his own home-bred fancy.

Mr. Banks has written a Civil History of Rome, but it seems not to have answered the great end which it proposed.

The labors of Niebuhr, Arnold, and Merivale have accomplished much towards furnishing the materials of such history, and Becker, in his Gallus, has drawn a picture not uninteresting of the private life of the Romans at the commencement of the Empire.

I know nothing of the fact, but I once had an intimation, that one of the most distinguished writers of our time and of our country, has had his thoughts turned to this subject for several years. If this be so, and the work, said to be in contemplation, be perfected, it will be true, as I have no doubt, that the Civil History of the great Republic of antiquity will have been written, not only with thorough research, but also with elegance of style, and chaste, classical illustration, by a citizen of the great Republic of modern times. I trust, that when this work shall appear, if it shall appear, we shall not only see the Roman Consul and the Roman General, the Comitia and the Forum, but that we shall also see Roman hearths and altars, the Roman matron at the head of her household, Roman children in their schools of instruction, and the whole of Roman life fully presented to our view, so far as the materials, now existing in separate and special works, afford the means.

It is in our day only, that the history and progress of the civil and social institutions and manners of England have become the subjects of particular attention.

Sharon Turner, Lingard, and, more than all, Mr. Hallam, have laid this age, and all following ages, under the heaviest obligations by their labors in this field of literary composition ; nor would I separate from them the writings of a most learned and eloquent person, whose work on English History is now in progress, nor the author of the Pictorial History of England. But there is still wanting a full, thorough, and domestic, social account of our English ancestors, that is, a history which shall trace the progress of social life in the intercourse of man with man ; the advance of arts, the various changes in the habits and occupations of individuals ; and those improvements in domestic life, which have attended the condition and meliorated the circumstances of men in the lapse of ages. We still have not the means of learning, to any great extent, how our English ancestors, at their homes, and in their houses, were fed, and lodged, and clothed, and what were their daily employments. We want a history of firesides ; we want to know when kings and queens exchanged beds of straw for beds of down, and ceased to breakfast on beef and beer. We wish to see more, and to know more, of the changes which took place, from age to age, in the homes of England, from the castle and the palace, down to the humblest cottage. Mr. Henry's book, so far as it goes, is not without its utility, but it stops too soon, and, even in regard to the period which it embraces, it is not sufficiently full and satisfactory in its particulars.

The feudal ages were military and agricultural, but the splendor of arms, in the history of the times, monopolised the genius of writers ; and perhaps materials are not now abundant for forming a knowledge of the

essential industry of the country. He would be a public benefactor, who should instruct us in the modes of cultivation and tillage prevailing in England, from the conquest down, and in the advancement of manufactures, from their inception in the time of Henry IV., to the period of their considerable development, two centuries afterwards.

There are two sources of information on these subjects, which have never yet been fully explored, and which, nevertheless, are overflowing fountains of knowledge. I mean the statutes, and the proceedings of the courts of law. At an early period of life, I recurred, with some degree of attention, to both these sources of information ; not so much for professional purposes, as for the elucidation of the progress of Society. I acquainted myself with the object, and purposes, and substance of every published statute in British legislation. These showed me what the legislature of the country was concerned in, from age to age, and from year to year. And I learned from the reports of controversies, in the courts of law, what were the pursuits and occupations of individuals, and what the objects which most earnestly engaged attention. I hardly know anything which more repays research, than studies of this kind. We learn from them what pursuits occupied men during the feudal ages. We see the efforts of society to throw off the chains of this feudal dominion. We see too, in a most interesting manner, the ingenious devices resorted to, to break the thralldom of personal slavery. We see the beginning of manufacturing interests, and at length bursts upon us the full splendor of the commercial age.

Littleton, Coke, Plowden, what are they ? How their

learning fades away and becomes obsolete, when Holt, and Somers, and Mansfield arise, catching themselves, and infusing all around them, the influences and the knowledge, which commerce had shed upon the world !

Our great teachers and examples in the historical art are, doubtless, the eminent historians of the Greek and Roman ages. In their several ways, they are the masters to whom all succeeding times have looked for instruction and improvement. They are the models which have stood the test of time, and, like the glorious creations in marble, of Grecian genius, have been always admired and never surpassed.

We have our favorites in literature, as well as in other things, and, I confess, that, among the Grecian writers, my estimate of Herodotus is great. His evident truthfulness, his singular simplicity of style, and his constant respect and veneration for sacred and divine things, win my regard. It is true that he sometimes appears credulous, which caused Aristotle to say of him, that he was a story-teller. But, in respect to this, two things are to be remarked ; the one is, that he never avers as a fact, that which rests on the accounts of others ; the other, that all subsequent travels and discoveries have tended to confirm his fidelity. From his great qualities as a writer, as well as from the age in which he lived, he is justly denominated the " Father of History." Herodotus was a conscientious narrator of what he saw and heard. In his manner there is much of the old epic style ; indeed, his work may be considered as the connecting link between the epic legend and political history ; truthful, on the one hand, since it was a genuine history : but, on the other, conceived and executed in the spirit of poetry, and not the profounder

spirit of political philosophy. It breaths a reverential submission to the divine will, and recognizes distinctly the governing hand of Providence in the affairs of men. But, upon the whole, I am compelled to regard Thucydides as the greater writer. Thucydides was equally truthful, but more conversant with the motives and character of men in their political relations. He took infinite pains to make himself thoroughly acquainted with the transactions that occurred in his own day, and which became the subject of his own narrative.*

It is said, even, that persons were employed by him to obtain information from both the belligerent powers, for his use, while writing the history of the Peloponnesian war.

He was one of the most eminent citizens of the Athenian republic, educated under the Institutions of Solon, and trained in all the political wisdom, which these institutions had developed in the two centuries since their establishment. A more profound intellect never applied itself to historical investigation; a more clear-sighted and impartial judge of human conduct never dealt with the fortunes and acts of political communities.

The work of Herodotus is graphic, fluent, dramatic, and ethical in the highest degree; but it is not the work of the citizen of a free republic, personally experienced in the conduct of its affairs. The History of the Peloponnesian war, on the other hand, could only have been produced by a man of large experience, and who added to vast genius deep personal insight into the workings of various public institutions. As Thucydides himself says, his history was written not for the en-

* See Book V., § 26.

tertainment of the moment, but to be "a possession forever."

There can, it seems to me, be no reasonable doubt, that the first works, by which man expressed his thoughts and feelings in an orderly composition, were essentially poetical. In the earliest writings, of which we know anything with distinctness, we have an union, or mingling of poetry and fact, embodying the traditions and history of the people among which they arose.

Like other intellectual culture, this form of History appeared first in the East, and, from the days of Moses and Joshua down to our own times, it has there retained substantially the same character. I mean, it has been a remarkable mixture of the spirit of History and of epic poetry. In Greece, we may observe originally the same state of things ; but the two forms of composition at length became separated, though the Greek historical art, when highest, never loses all its relations to the epic. The earliest Greek poets were religious and historical poets, dealing in the traditions and mythology of their country, and so continued down through Homer. Herodotus was by birth an Asiatic Greek, and was quite imbued with the oriental spirit. In his time, of public records there were none, or, at the most, there were only local registers of public events, and their dates, such, for instance, as those kept by the priesthood in the temples at Delphi and Argos, or the registers of particular families. He travelled, therefore, to collect the materials for his history. But he made of them one whole, and laid one idea at the bottom, with as much epic simplicity as Homer did in the *Iliad*. His subject was the contest of Greece with the

Persians, and the triumph of Grecian liberty, or, more strictly, the great Grecian victory over the barbarians, who had conquered the world, as then known. The relations between Herodotus and Homer are not to be mistaken ; he not only has episodes, like the long one about Egypt, and formal speeches, which were common in historical works till the sixteenth century of our era, and have not been unknown since,* but he has dialogues. One of his series of speeches, which partakes of the character of a dialogue, shows a remarkable advancement in political knowledge for that age ; I mean that in which the conspirators against the Magi of Persia, previously to the elevation of Darius, discuss the different forms of government, almost in the spirit of Montesquieu. But all these things are kept in their proper places by Herodotus. He feels the connection of his subject all the way through ; how one event proceeds from another, and how, in the spirit of Epic unity, everything tends to the principal result, or contributes to it directly.

In Thucydides, the art of History is further advanced, though he lived very little later than Herodotus. He probably had read or heard his history, though that is doubted.

Thucydides did not, indeed, make one whole of his work, for he did not survive the war, whose history he undertook to relate ; but he is less credulous than Herodotus ; he has no proper dialogue ; he is more compact ; he indulges very little in episodes ; he draws characters, and his speeches are more like formal, stately discussions. And he says of them, they are

* They are adopted, for instance, by Botta.

such as he either heard himself, or received from those who did hear them, and he states that he gives them in their true substance.

There is nothing to create a doubt, that personally he heard the oration of Pericles; and it is remarkable that, throughout the most flourishing period of Greek literature, both poetical and historical, productions were composed to be heard, rather than to be read; and the practice of listening to their rehearsals led the Greek people to attain great accuracy, as well as retentiveness, of memory.

In short, Herodotus' work seems a natural, fresh production of the soil; that of Thucydides belongs to a more advanced state of culture. Quintilian says of the former, "*In Herodoto omnia leniter fluunt;*" of the latter, "*Densus et brevis et semper instans sibi.*"

Xenophon, in his *Hellenica*, continues Thucydides. He was a military leader, and familiar with the affairs of state, and though not so deep a thinker, was a more graceful and easy writer. Polybius, living in a much later period, is defective in style, but is a wise and sensible author. His object is not merely to show what has been, but to attempt the instruction of the future; making his work, what he calls a demonstrative history, fitted for the use of statesmen. He is the last of the really good Greek historians.

The ROMANS had the great Greek masters, in prose and poetry, all before them, and imitated them in every thing, but approached their models nearly, only in Eloquence and History. Like the Greeks too, they had early poetical histories, historical legends, and songs. Ennius wrote a sort of Epic History of Rome. Cæsar, one of the most distinguished of all great men, wrote ac-

counts of what he had done, or what related directly to himself. The clearness, purity, and precision of his style are as characteristic of him, as any of his great achievements.

Sallust followed more closely the Greek models. Each of his two remaining histories is an Epic whole ; short, indeed, but complete ; fashioned with the greatest exactness ; and remarkable for a dignity and stateliness of style, which Cæsar did not seek, and which would not have been fitting for his personal memoirs.

Livy had another purpose ; there is an Epic completeness in his great work, though it has come down to us in a mutilated state. “ *Majestas populi Romani* ” was his subject, and he sacrifices much to it ; even, not unfrequently, the rigor of truth. His style is rich and flowing. Quintilian speaks of “ *Livii lactea ubertas*,” the creamy richness of Livy. His descriptions are excellent ; indeed, there is a nobleness and grandeur about the whole work, well fitted to his magnificent purpose in writing it.

Tacitus comes later, when he could no longer feel so proud of his country as Livy had done. He had much of the spirit and the power of Thucydides. Both were great, upright men, dissatisfied with their times ; the one, because of the ascendancy of demagogues among the people, the other with the imperial vices and the growing demoralization of his age. Tacitus is, however, free from passion, and is a wise, statesmanlike and profound writer, throughout. Of both his History and Annals considerable portions are lost. We cannot, therefore, tell how much of completeness and proportion there may have been in either. But the nature of the period he discusses in each, a period, as he says “ *opi-*

mum casibus, atrox praeliis, discors seditionibus, ipsa etiam pace sævum," not less than the severity of his own nature forbade poetical ornament. In character-drawing he is hardly excelled by any one. By a single dash of his pencil, he sometimes throws out a likeness, which all feel and acknowledge; and yet it has been thought, that some degree of falling off in the purity and elegance of the Latin language is discernible in his pages.

Of the Roman historians my preference is strongly for Sallust. I admire his reach of thought, his clearness of style, as well as his accuracy of narration. He is sufficiently concise; he is sententious, without being meagre or obscure, and his power of personal and individual description is remarkable. There are, indeed, in his style, some roughnesses belonging to the Roman tongue at an earlier age, but they seem to strengthen the structure of his sentences, without especially injuring their beauty. No character-drawing can well exceed his delineation of Catiline, his account of Jugurtha, or his parallel between Cæsar and Cato. I have thought, sometimes, that I saw resemblances between his terse and powerful periods, and the remarks and sayings of Dr. Johnson, as they appear, not in his stately performances, but in the record of his conversations by Boswell.

In turning to peruse once more the pages of Sallust, to refresh myself for the preparation of this address, I was struck by the coincidence of a transaction, narrated by him, with one which we have seen very recently in our own country.

When Jugurtha had put to death Hiempsal and expelled Adherbal from his rightful throne, the latter (who

was born in Numidia, and not in Hungary), came to Rome to invoke, what we should call, the intervention of the Roman people. His speech, delivered on that occasion, in the Senate, as Sallust has given it, is one of the most touching ever made by a man in misfortune, and suffering from injury, to those having the power of granting relief or redress. His supplication to the Senate is founded on the broad and general idea, that the Roman people were just themselves, and as they had the power, so it was their duty, to prevent or punish high-handed injustice, threatened or inflicted by others. He thus speaks :

“Sed, quoniam parum tuta per se ipsa probitas, neque mihi in manu fuit Jugurtha qualis foret : ad vos confugi, Patres conscripti, quibus, quod miserimum, cogor prius oneri, quam usui esse. Ceteri reges, aut bello victi in amicitiam a vobis recepti, aut in suis dubiis rebus societatem vestram appetiverunt. Familia nostra cum populo Romano bello Carthaginiensi amicitiam instituit : quo tempore magis fides ejus, quam fortuna petenda erat. Quorum progeniem vos, Patres conscripti, nolite pati frustra a vobis auxilium petere. Si ad impetrandum nihil causæ haberem, præter miserandam fortunam ; quod paulo ante rex, genere, fama atque copiis potens, nunc deformatus ærumnis, inops, alienas opes expecto : *tamen erat majestatis Romani populi prohibere injuriam neque pati cujusquam regnum per scelus crescere.* * * * *

“Quid agam ? quo potissimum infelix accedam ? Generis præsidia omnia extincta sunt : pater, uti necesse erat, naturæ concessit ; fratri, quem minime decuit, propinquus per scelus vitam eripuit ; affines, amicos, propinquos ceteros, alium alia clades oppressit : capti ab Jugurtha, pars in crucem acti, pars bestiis objecti ; pauci, quibus relicta anima, clausi in tenebris, cum mœrore et luctu, morte graviores vitam exigunt. Si omnia, quæ aut amisi, aut ex necessariis adversa facta sunt, incolumia manerent, tamen, si quid ex improvise accidisset, vos implorarem, Patres conscripti ; quibus, pro magnitudine imperii, jus et injurias omnes curæ esse decet. Nunc vero exul patria, domo, solus et omnium honestarum rerum egens, quo accedam, aut quos appellem ? nationesne, an reges, qui omnes familiæ nostræ ob vestram amicitiam infesti sunt ? an quoquam mihi adire licet, ubi non majorum meorum hostilia monumenta plurima ? aut quisquam nostri misereri potest, qui aliquando vobis hostis fuit ? * * * *

“At ego infelix, in tanta mala præcipitatus ex patrio regno, rerum humanarum spectaculum præbeo : incertus quid agam, tuasne injurias persequar, ipse auxilii egens ; an regno consulam, cujus vitæ necisque potestas ex opibus alienis pendet. Utinam emori fortunis meis honestus exitus esset, neu vivere contemptus viderer, si defessus malis injuriæ concessissem. Nunc neque vivere lubet, neque mori licet sine dedecore. Patres conscripti, per vos, per liberos atque parentes vestros, per majestatem populi Romani, subvenite misero mihi ; ite obviam injuriæ ; nolite pati regnum Numidiæ, per scelus et sanguinem familiæ nostræ tabescere.”

While I confess myself not competent to sit in judgment on the great masters of Roman story, still, it has always struck me that in the style of Livy, there is so much fulness, so much accumulation of circumstances, as occasionally tends to turgidity. I speak this, however, with the greatest diffidence. Livy seems to me like the rivers under the influence of copious, spring floods, when not only is the main channel full, but all the tributary streams are also tending to overflow ; while Sallust, I think, takes care only that there shall be one deep, clear, strong and rapid current, to convey him and his thoughts to their destined end.

I do not mean to say, that the skilful use of circumstance, either in the hand of a historian or a poet, is not a great power—I think it is. What we call graphic description, is but the presentation of the principal idea, with a discreet accompaniment of interesting concomitants.

The introduction of a single auxiliary thought or expression sometimes gives a new glow to the historical or poetical picture. Particularity, well set forth, enchains attention. In our language, no writer has understood this better than Milton. His poetical images and descriptions are sure to omit nothing, which can make those images and those descriptions striking,

distinct and certain, while all else is industriously repelled.

Witness the fall of Vulcan, which is stated with such beautiful detail, so much step by step, and terminated by such a phrase and comparison at the end, as greatly to enhance the idea, both of its length, and its rapidity.

“Men call'd him Mulciber ; and how he fell
 “From Heaven, they fabled, thrown by angry Jove
 “Sheer o'er the crystal battlements ; from morn
 “To noon he fell, from noon to dewy eve,
 “A summer's day ; and with the setting sun
 “*Dropt* from the zenith like a falling star,
 “On Lemnos the *Ægean* isle.”

His description of vocal music in the *Allegro* is another instance of the same kind :

“And ever against eating cares,
 “Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
 “Married to immortal verse,
 “Such as the meeting soul may pierce
 “In notes, with many a winding bout
 “Of linked sweetness long drawn out,
 “With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
 “The melting voice through mazes running,
 “Untwisting all the chains that tie
 “The hidden soul of harmony.
 “That Orpheus' self may heave his head
 “From golden slumber on a bed
 “Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear
 “Such strains as would have won the ear
 “Of Pluto, to have quite set free
 “His half-regain'd Eurydice.”

I hardly know anything, which surpasses these exquisite lines ; so poetical, and, at the same time, so

thoroughly and absolutely English, and so free from all foreign idiom.

Several stanzas of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Church Yard," are also remarkable for the power and accuracy with which rural scenery is presented, by grouping together many interesting objects in one picture.

Another poetical instance of the same beauty is the "Burial of Sir John Moore."

There are remarkable instances of the same skill in writing in some of the English prose writers, and especially in the productions of Daniel De Foe. No boy doubts that everything told of Robinson Crusoe is exactly true, because all is so circumstantially told; I believe I was about ten years of age, when I first read Robinson Crusoe, and I remember still the distress and perspiration, which I was thrown into, by his dangerous condition in his boat. "There was a current on both sides, a strong eddy under the shore. The sea was making a great breach upon that point. It was not safe to keep the shore, for the breach, nor leave it for the stream. He could do nothing with his paddles, and there was not a breath of wind. A great depth of water, running like the sluice of a mill, carried him farther and farther from the eddy, which was on the left hand, so that he could not keep his boat on the edge of it, and as the current on the north side, and the current on the south side would both join at a few leagues distant, he thought himself irrecoverably gone." And I thought so too. No man doubts, until he is informed of the contrary, that the historian of the plague of London, actually saw all that he described, although De Foe was not born till a subsequent year.

It is a well known saying, that the lie with circum-

stance is exceedingly calculated to deceive : and that is true, and it is equally true, not only that fictitious history gains credit and belief by the skilful use of circumstance, but that true History, also, may derive much additional interest from the same source.

In general, however, historical facts are to be related with rather a close and exclusive regard to such, and such only as are important.

The art of Historical composition owes its origin to the institutions of Political Freedom. Under the despotism of the Ganges and the Indus, poetry flourished with oriental luxuriance, from the earliest times ; but in the immense compass of that rich, primeval literature, there is no History, in the high sense of that term. The banks of the Nile were crowded with historical monuments and memorials, stretching back into the remotest antiquity ; and recent researches have discovered historical records of the Pharaohs in the scrolls of papyrus, some of them as ancient as the books of Moses. But in all these, there is no history composed according to the principles of art. In Greece, the Epic Song, founded on traditionary legends, long preceded historical composition. I remember when I thought it the greatest wonder in the world, that the poems of Homer should have been written at a period so remote, that the earliest Grecian History should have given no probable account of their author. I did not then know, or had not then considered, that poetical writings, hymns, songs, accounts of personal adventures like those of Hercules and Jason, were, in the nature of things, earlier than regular Historical narratives. Herodotus informs us, that Homer lived four hundred years before his time. There is, neverthe-

less, something very wonderful in the poems of the old Ionian.

In general, it is true of the languages of nations, that in their earlier ages, they contain the substantial bone and sinew characteristic of their idiom, yet that they are rough, imperfect, and without polish. Thus Chaucer wrote English, but it is what we call old English, and, though always vigorous and often incomparably sweet, far remote from the smoothness and fluency belonging to the style of Pope and Addison. And Spenser wrote English, but, though rich, sonorous and gorgeous, it has not the precision and accuracy of those later writers. It would seem, that many books must be written and read, and a great many tongues and pens employed, before the language of a country reaches its highest polish and perfection. Now, the wonder is, how a language should become so perfect, as was the Greek of Homer, at the time when that language could have been very little written. Doubtless, in succeeding ages, the compass of the Greek tongue was enlarged, as knowledge became more extended, and new things called for new words ; but, within the sphere of Grecian knowledge, as it existed in the time of Homer, it can scarce be questioned, that his style is quite as perfect and polished, as that of any of his successors, and perhaps more picturesque. The cause of this apparent anomaly is, that the language had not only been spoken for many centuries, by a people of great ingenuity and extraordinary good taste, but had been carefully cultivated by the recitation of poetical compositions, on a great variety of religious and festive occasions.

It was not until the legislation of Solon had laid the foundation of free political institutions, and these insti-



tutions had unfolded a free and powerful and active political life, in the Athenian Republic; until the discussion of public affairs, in the Senate and the popular Assembly, had created deliberative eloquence, and the open administration of Justice in the Courts, and under the Laws established by Solon, had applied to the transactions between the citizens all the resources of refined logic, and drawn into the sphere of civil rights and obligations the power of high forensic oratory: it was not until these *results* of the legislative wisdom of Solon had been attained, that the art of history rose and flourished in Greece. With the decline of Grecian liberty began the decline in the art of Historical Composition. Histories were written under the Grecian Kings of Egypt; and a long line of writers flourished under the Byzantine Emperors; but the high art of historical composition, as perfected in the master-works of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, had perished in the death of political freedom.

The origin, progress, and decline of History, as an Art, were nearly the same in Rome. Sallust and Livy flourished at the close of the Republic and the commencement of the Empire. The great works of Tacitus himself are thought by many to betray the beginning of decline in the Art, and later writers exhibit its fall.

The art of History again revived with the rise of the Italian Republics; and since the revival of literature, at the close of the middle ages, it will probably be found that three things naturally rise into importance together; that is to say, Civil Liberty, Eloquence, and the art of Historical Writing.

Other foundation is not to be laid for authentic his-

tory than well authenticated facts ; but, on this foundation, structures may be raised of different characteristics, historical, biographical, and philosophical. One writer may confine himself to exact and minute narration ; another, true to the general story, may embellish that story with more or less of external ornament, or of eloquence in description ; a third, with a deeper philosophical spirit, may look into the causes of events and transactions, trace them with more profound research to their sources in the elements of human nature, or consider and solve, with more or less success, the most important question, how far the character of individuals has produced public events, or how far on the other hand public events have produced and formed the character of individuals.

Therefore one history of the same period, in human affairs, no more renders another history of the same period useless, or unadvisable, than the structure of one temple forbids the erection of another, or one statue of Apollo, Hercules, or Pericles, should suppress all other attempts to produce statues of the same persons.

But, gentlemen, I must not dwell upon these general topics. We are Americans. We have a country all our own ; we are all linked to its fates and its fortunes ; it is already not without renown ; it has been the theatre of some of the most important human transactions, and it may well become us, to reflect on the topics and the means furnished for historical composition in our own land. I have abstained, on this occasion, Gentlemen, from much comment on histories composed by European writers of modern times ; and, for obvious reasons, I abstain altogether from remarks upon the writers of our own country.

Works have been written upon the History of the United States, other works upon the same subject are in progress, and, no doubt, new works are contemplated, and will be accomplished.

It need not be doubted, that what has been achieved by the great men who have preceded our generation, will be properly recorded by their successors. A country, in which highly interesting events occur, is not likely to be destitute of scholars and authors, fit to transmit those events to posterity. For the present, I content myself with a few general remarks on the subject.

In the History of the United States there are three epochs. The first extends from the origin and settlement of the Colonies, respectively, to the year 1774. During this, much the longest period, the history of the country is the history of separate communities and governments, with different laws, and institutions, though all were of a common origin; not identical indeed, yet having a strong family resemblance, and all more or less reference to the constitution, and common law of the parent country.

In all these Governments the principle of popular representation more or less prevailed. It existed in the State Governments, in counties, in large districts, and in townships and parishes. And it is not irrelevant to remark, that, by the exercise of the rights enjoyed under these popular principles, the whole people came to be prepared, beyond the example of all others, for the observance of the same principles in the establishment of national institutions, and the administration of sovereign powers.

The second period extends from 1774, through the

great event of the Declaration of Independence, in which the colonies were called STATES, and, through the existence of the Confederation, down to the period of the adoption of the present Constitution. The third embraces the period from 1789 to the present time.

To avoid dealing with events too recent, it might be well to consider the third era, or epoch, as terminating with the close of President Washington's administration, and going back into the second, so far as to trace the events and occurrences, which showed the necessity of a general government, different from that framed by the articles of confederation, and which prepared the minds of the people for the adoption of the present Constitution. No doubt, the Assembly of the first Continental Congress may be regarded as the era at which the Union of these States commenced. This took place in Philadelphia, the city distinguished by the great civil events of our early history, on the 5th of September, 1774, on which day the first Continental Congress assembled. Delegates were present from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia.

Let this day be ever remembered! It saw assembled from the several Colonies those great men, whose names have come down to us, and will descend to all posterity. Their proceedings are remarkable for simplicity, dignity, and unequalled ability. At that day, probably, there could have been convened on no part of this globe an equal number of men, possessing greater talents and ability, or animated by a higher and more patriotic motive. They were men, full of the

spirit of the occasion, imbued deeply with the general sentiment of the country, of large comprehension, of long foresight, and of few words. They made no speeches for ostentation, they sat with closed doors, and their great maxim was "*faire sans dire*." It is true, they only wrote; but the issuing of such writings, on such authority, and at such a crisis, was action, high, decisive, National action. They knew the history of the past, they were alive to all the difficulties and all the duties of the present, and they acted from the first, as if the future were all open before them. Peyton Randolph was unanimously chosen President, and Charles Thomson was appointed Secretary. In such a constellation, it would be invidious to point out the bright particular stars. Let me only say, what none can consider injustice to others, that George Washington was one of the number.

The proceedings of the assembly were introduced by religious observances, and devout supplications to the Throne of Grace for the inspirations of wisdom and the spirit of good counsels.

On the second day of the Session it was ordered, that a committee should be appointed, to state the rights of the Colonies, the instances in which those rights had been violated, and the means proper to be pursued for their restoration; and another committee, to examine and report upon the several statutes of the English parliament, which had been passed affecting the trade and manufactures of the Colonies. The members of these committees were chosen on the following day. Immediately afterwards Congress took up, as the foundation of their proceedings, certain resolutions adopted, just before the time of their assem-

bling, by delegates from towns in the county of Suffolk, and especially the town of Boston.

Boston, the early victim of the infliction of wrong by the mother country, the early champion of American liberty ; Boston, though, in this vast country, she may be now surpassed by other cities in numbers, in commerce and wealth, can never be surpassed in the renown of her revolutionary history. She will stand acknowledged, while the world doth stand, as the early promoter and champion of the rights of the colonies. The English crown frowned upon her with severity and indignation ; it only made her stand more erect, and put on a face of greater boldness and defiance. The parliament poured upon her all its indignation ; it only held her up with greater illumination, and drew towards her a more enthusiastic attachment and veneration from the country. Boston, as she was in heart, in principle and conduct in 1774, so may she remain, till her three hills shall sink into the sea and be no more remembered among men.

Gentlemen, these early proceedings of the citizens of Boston, and other inhabitants of the county of Suffolk, deserve to be written, where all posterity may read them. They were carried to the Representative of Royalty, by the first distinguished martyr in the cause of liberty, Joseph Warren. How fit, that he, who was not long afterwards to fall in the defence of this liberty, and to seal his love of country with his blood, full of its spirit and its principles, should be charged with its remonstrances to the throne of England ! No encomium, no eulogy upon the State of which I have the honor to be a citizen, can exceed that, which is expressed in the unanimous resolution of the first

American Congress, of the 8th of October, 1774, in these words :

“ Resolved, That this Congress approve the opposition of the Massachusetts Bay to the execution of the late acts of Parliament ; and if the same shall be attempted to be carried into execution by force, in such case all America ought to support them in their opposition.”

Gentlemen, I will not believe, that the ancient commonwealth of Massachusetts, can ever depart from her true character, or cease to deserve this immortal honor ; I think it impossible. But should she be left to such forgetfulness of herself, and all that belongs to her ; should she temporarily, or permanently, stray away from the paths of her ancient patriotism ; should she, which Heaven avert, be willing, to throw off her original, and all American, mantle, and to disrobe herself, in the presence of the world, of all her nationality of character, there are others, who would eagerly seize that mantle, and who would show themselves capable of wearing it with grace, dignity, and power. I need not say here, where those others are to be found. I am in the city, in which WASHINGTON first took upon himself the administration of the Government, I am near the spot, on which all hearts and all hopes were concentrated in 1789. I bring the whole scene, with all its deep interests, before me. I see the crowds, that fill and throng the streets, I see the ten thousand faces, anxious to look on him, to whose wisdom, prudence, and patriotism, the destinies of the country are now committed. I see the august form, I behold the serene face of WASHINGTON ; I observe his reverent manner, when he rises in the presence of countless multitudes, and, looking up with religious awe to Heaven, solemnly

swears before those multitudes, and before Him, that sitteth on the circle of those Heavens, that he will support the Constitution of his country, so help him God !

And I can hear the shouts and acclamations, that rend the air, I see outpouring tears of joy and hope, I see men clasping each other's hands, and I hear them exclaim: " we have at last a country ; we have a Union ; and in that Union is strength. We have a government, able to keep us together ; and we have a Chief Magistrate, an object of confidence, attachment and love to us all."

Citizens of New York, men of this generation, is there anything, which warms your hearts more than these recollections ? Or can you contemplate the unparalleled growth of your city, in population and all human blessings, without feeling, that the spot is hallowed, and the hour consecrated, where and when your career of prosperity and happiness began ?

But, Gentlemen, my heart would sink within me, and voice and speech would depart from me, if I were compelled to believe, that your fidelity to the Constitution of the country, signal and unquestioned as it is, could ever exceed that of the State, whose soil was moistened by the blood of the first heroes in the cause of liberty, and whose history has been characterized, from the beginning, by zealous and uniform support of the principles of Washington.

This first Congress sat from the fifth day of September, until the twenty-sixth of October, and it then dissolved. Its whole proceedings are embraced in forty-nine pages, but these few pages contain the substance, and the original form and pressure of our American Liberty ; before a government of checks and

balances and departments, with separate and well defined powers, was established. Its principal papers are: an address to the people of Great Britain, written by John Jay; a memorial to the inhabitants of the British colonies, written by Richard Henry Lee; a petition to the King, and an address to the inhabitants of Quebec, written by John Dickinson.*

There is one resolution of the Old Congress, adopted on the fourteenth of March, 1776, which has never received so much attention, as it deserves.

It is in these words :

"Resolved, That it be recommended to the several Assemblies, Conventions, Councils or Committees of Safety, immediately to cause all persons to be disarmed within their respective Colonies, who are notoriously disaffected to the cause of America, or who have not associated, and refuse to associate to defend by arms the United Colonies against the hostile attempts of the British Fleets and Armies."

Extract from the minutes.

CHARLES THOMSON,
Secretary.

Several of the Governors of the States, Conventions,

* In a copy of the printed journal of the proceedings of the Provincial Congress, of 1774, which belonged to Caesar Rodney, and which contains interlineations, probably in his handwriting, the petition to the King is stated to have been written by John Adams, and corrected by John Dickinson. Its authorship is claimed also for Richard Henry Lee, by his biographer, probably on the ground, that he was the chairman of the committee, and may have prepared the original draft of the petition which was re-committed, Mr. Dickinson being at the same time added to the committee; and it is included in the edition of Mr. Dickinson's writings, published at Wilmington, during his lifetime, and superintended by himself. Mr. Rodney's copy of the journal ascribes the memorial to the inhabitants of the British colonies, to William Livingston. But there is the best proof that it was written by Richard Henry Lee. This copy of the journal is in the possession of Col. Peter Force, of Washington, whose library of American History is probably not surpassed in value or extent by any other collection of books and manuscripts on this subject, and whose indefatigable industry and conscientious research, in collecting the materials for an American history, to which he has devoted his life, are worthy of great consideration.

Councils or Committees of Safety, took immediate measures for carrying this resolution into effect. The proceedings, in consequence of it, have been preserved, however, only in a few States. The fullest returns, which can be found, are believed to be from New Hampshire and New York. The form adopted was a recital of the resolution of Congress, and then the promise, or pledge, in the following words :—

“In consequence of the above resolution of the Continental Congress, and to show our determination in joining our American brethren in defending the lives, liberties and properties of the inhabitants of the United Colonies: We, the subscribers, do hereby solemnly engage and promise, that we will, to the utmost of our power, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, with arms, oppose the hostile proceedings of the British fleets and armies against the United American Colonies.”

In the mountainous State of New Hampshire, and among the highest of its mountains, then containing only a few scattered settlements, was the township of Salisbury. The Merrimac river, forming its eastern boundary, now so pleasant in scenery, and with so much richness and industry on its banks, was then a roaring and foaming stream, seeking its way amidst immense forests on either side, from the White Mountains to the sea. The settlers in this township were collected, and the promise or pledge proposed by the Continental Congress, of life and fortune, presented to them. “All,” as the record says, “freely signed except two.”

In looking to this record, thus connected with the men of my own birth-place, I confess I was gratified to find who were the signers, and who were the dissentients. Among the former was He, from whom I am immediately descended, with all his

brothers, and his whole kith and kin. This is sufficient emblazonry for my arms, enough of heraldry for me.*

Are there young men before me, who wish to learn and to imitate the spirit of their ancestors, who wish to live and breathe in that spirit, who desire that every pulsation of their hearts, and every aspiration of their ambition shall be American and nothing but American? Let them master the contents of the immortal papers

* The signers in Salisbury, New Hampshire, were the following:—

Ebenezer Johnson,	Iddo Scribner,	William Webster,
Samuel Scribner,	John Bean,	Jacob Garland,
John Collins,	Obadiah P. Fifield,	William Eastman.
Reuben Greele,	Benjamin Scribner,	Joseph Marston,
William Newton,	Edward Scribner,	Moses Sawyer,
Benjamin Bean,	John Scribner,	John Challis,
Job Heath,	Jacob Bohonon,	Benjamin Greele,
Phineas Bean,	John Bowen,	John Fellows,
John Jameson,	Benjamin Sanborn,	Ephraim Colby,
John Sanborn,	Joseph Basford,	John Webster, Jr.,
Jacob True,	Daniel Sewel,	Andrew Robinson, Jr.,
John Gale,	John Webster,	Ananiah Bohonon,
Moses Elkins,	Israel Webster,	Andrew Bohonon,
Rev. Jonathan Searle,	Robert Barber,	Daniel Huntoon,
Ebenezer Webster,	Nathaniel Marston,	Moses Selly,
John Fifield,	Robert Smith,	Gideon Dow,
William Searle,	Andrew Pettingill,	Jacob Cochran,
Abel Tandey,	William Calef,	Nathan Colby,
Jeremiah Webster,	Leonard Judkins,	Joseph French,
Edward Fifield,	Jonathan Fifield,	Stephen Call,
Moses Garland,	Edward Eastman,	Matthew Pettingill,
Edward Heath,	Shubael Greele,	Ebenezer Clifford,
Ezra Tucker,	Benjamin Huntoon,	Reuben Hoyt,
Eben Tucker,	Jonathan Cram,	Joseph Fifield,
Nathaniel Meloon,	David Pettingill,	Abel Elkins,
Hezekiah Foster,	Joseph Bartlett,	Abraham Fifield,
Nat. Meloon, Jr.,	John Rowe,	Richard Piermont,
Daniel Warren,	Cutting Stevens.	

This may certify to the General Assembly or Committee of Safety, of the Colony of *New Hampshire*, that we, the subscribers, have offered the within Declaration to the inhabitants of the town of Salisbury, and they sign freely, Mr. Sinkler Bean, and Joseph Bean, Esq., excepted.

EBENEZER WEBSTER, } Selectmen
JONATHAN FIFIELD, } of Salisbury.

Salisbury, September 12th, 1776.

of the first Congress, and fully imbue themselves with their sentiments.

The great Lord Chatham spoke of this assembly in terms, which have caused my heart to thrill, and my eyes to be moistened, whenever I recollect them, from my first reading of them, to this present hour :

“ When your lordships look at the papers, transmitted us from America, when you consider their decency, firmness and wisdom, you cannot but respect their cause, and wish to make it your own. For myself, I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and observation, and it has been my favorite study, I have read Thucydides, and have studied and admired the master-states of the world, that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the general Congress at Philadelphia. I trust it is obvious to your lordships, that all attempts to impose servitude upon such men, to establish despotism over such a mighty continental *nation*, must be vain, must be fatal. We shall be *forced ultimately to retract* ; let us retract while we can, not when we must.”

This first Congress, for the ability which it manifested, the principles which it proclaimed, and the characters of those who composed it, makes an illustrious chapter in our American History. Its members should be regarded not only individually, but as in a group ; they should be viewed as living pictures, exhibiting young America as it then was, and when the seeds of its public destiny were beginning to start into life, well described by our early motto, as being full of energy and prospered by heaven :

“ Non sine Dis, animosus infans.”

Some of the members of this Congress have lived to my time, and I have had the honor of seeing and knowing them, and there are those in this assembly, doubtless, who have beheld the stately form of Wash-

ington, and looked upon the mild and intelligent face, and heard the voice, of John Jay.

For myself, I love to travel back in imagination, to place myself in the midst of this assembly, this Union of greatness and patriotism, and to contemplate, as if I had witnessed, its profound deliberations, and its masterly exhibitions, both of the rights and of the wrongs of the country.

I may not dwell longer on this animating and enchanting picture. Another grand event succeeds it, and that is, the Convention which framed the Constitution, the spirited debates in the States, by the ablest men of those States, upon its adoption, and, finally, the first Congress, filled by the gray haired men of the revolution, and younger and vigorous patriots, and lovers of liberty, and Washington himself in the principal chair of State, surrounded by his Heads of Department, selected from those, who enjoyed the greatest portion of his own regard, and stood highest in the esteem of their country.

Neither Thucydides nor Xenophon, neither Sallust nor Livy presents any picture of an assembly of public men, or any scene of History, which, in its proper grandeur, or its large and lasting influence upon the happiness of mankind, equals this.

Its importance, indeed, did not, at the moment, strike the minds of ordinary men. But Burke saw it with an intuition, clear as the light of heaven. Charles Fox saw it; and sagacious and deep thinking minds over all Europe perceived it.

England, England, how would thy destinies have been altered, if the advice of Chatham, Burke and Fox had been followed!

Shall I say, altered for the better? certainly not. England is stronger and richer, at this moment, than if she had listened to the unheeded words of her great statesmen. Neither nations nor individuals always foresee that, which their own interest and happiness require.

Our greatest blessings often arise from the disappointment of our most anxious hopes, and our most fervent wishes :

———“ Let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail ; and that should teach us,
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough hew them how we will.”

Instead of subject colonies, England now beholds on these shores, a mighty rival, rich, powerful, intelligent like herself. And may these countries be forever friendly rivals. May their power and greatness, sustaining themselves, be always directed to the promotion of the peace, the prosperity, the enlightenment and the liberty of mankind ; and if it be their united destiny, in the course of human events, that they be called upon, in the cause of humanity, and in the cause of freedom, to stand against a world in arms, they are of a race, and of a blood, to meet that crisis, without shrinking from danger, and without quailing in the presence of earthly power.

Gentlemen, I must bring these desultory remarks to a close. I terminate them, where perhaps I ought to have begun—namely, with a few words on the present state and condition of our country, and the prospects, which are before her.

Unborn ages and visions of glory crowd upon my soul, the realization of all which, however, is in the hands and good pleasure of Almighty God, but, under his divine blessing, it will be dependent on the character and the virtues of ourselves, and of our posterity.

If classical history has been found to be, is now, and shall continue to be, the concomitant of free institutions, and of popular eloquence, what a field is opening to us for another Herodotus, another Thucydides, and another Livy ! And let me say, Gentlemen, that if we, and our posterity, shall be true to the Christian religion, if we and they shall live always in the fear of God, and shall respect his commandments, if we, and they, shall maintain just, moral sentiments, and such conscientious convictions of duty as shall control the heart and life, we may have the highest hopes of the future fortunes of our country ; and if we maintain those institutions of government and that political union, exceeding all praise as much, as it exceeds all former examples of political associations, we may be sure of one thing, that, while our country furnishes materials for a thousand masters of the Historic Art, it will afford no topic for a Gibbon. It will have no Decline and Fall. It will go on prospering and to prosper. But, if we and our posterity reject religious instruction and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution, which holds us together, no man can tell, how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity. Should that catastrophe happen, let it have no history ! Let the horrible narrative never be written ! Let its

fate be like that of the lost books of Livy, which no human eye shall ever read, or the missing Pleiad, of which no man can ever know more, than that it is lost, and lost forever!

But, Gentlemen, I will not take my leave of you in a tone of despondency. We may trust, that Heaven will not forsake us, nor permit us to forsake ourselves. We must strengthen ourselves, and gird up our loins with new resolution; we must counsel each other; and, determined to sustain each other in the support of the Constitution, prepare to meet manfully, and united, whatever of difficulty, or of danger, whatever of effort, or of sacrifice, the Providence of God may call upon us to meet. Are we of this generation so derelict, have we so little of the blood of our revolutionary fathers coursing through our veins, that we cannot preserve, what they achieved? The world will cry out "SHAME" upon us, if we show ourselves unworthy, to be the descendants of those great and illustrious men, who fought for their liberty, and secured it to their posterity, by the Constitution of the United States.

Gentlemen, exigencies arise in the history of nations, when competition and rivalry, disputes and contentions are powerful. Exigencies arise, in which good men of all parties, and all shades of political sentiment, are required to re-consider their opinions and differences, to re-adjust their positions, and to bring themselves together, if they can, in the spirit of harmony. Such a state of things, in my judgment, has happened in our day. An exigency has arisen, the duties and the dangers of which, should sink deep within all our hearts. We have a great and wise

Constitution. We have grown, flourished, and prospered under it, with a degree of rapidity, unequalled in the history of the world. Founded on the basis of equal civil rights, its provisions secure perfect equality and freedom; those who live under it are equal, and enjoy the same privileges. It is to be presumed, that all wise and good men of the nation have the same end in view, though they may take different means to obtain that great end, the preservation and protection of the Constitution and government. If, then, they have one and the same object, they must unite in the means, and be willing each to surrender something to the opinions of others, to secure the harmony of the whole. Unity of purpose should produce harmony of action. This general object, then, being the preservation of the Constitution, the only efficient means to accomplish this end, is the *union of all its friends*. The Constitution has enemies, secret and professed; but they cannot disguise the fact, that it secures us many benefits. These enemies are unlike in character, but they all act for the same purpose. Some of them are enthusiasts, self-sufficient and headstrong. They fancy, that they can strike out for themselves a better path, than that laid down for them; as the son of Apollo thought he could find a better course across the Heavens for the sun.

“Thus Phæton once, amidst the Ethereal plains
 Leaped on his father's car, and seized the reins,
 Far from his course impelled the glowing sun,
 Till nature's laws to wild disorder run.”

Heat, in the intellectual constitution of these enthusiasts, is distributed just exactly as it should not be;

they have hot heads and cold hearts. They are rash, reckless, and fierce for change, and with no affection for the existing institutions of their country.

Other enemies there are, more cool, and with more calculation. These have a deeper and more fixed and dangerous purpose; they formerly spoke of a forcible resistance to the provisions of the Constitution; they now speak of secession. Let me say, Gentlemen, that *secession* from us is *accession* elsewhere. He, who renounces the protection of the "stars and stripes," will assuredly shelter himself under another flag; that will happen from inevitable necessity.

These malcontents find it not difficult to inflame men's passions; they attribute all the misfortunes of individual men, of different States, sections and communities, all want of prosperity—to the Union. There is a strange co-operation of what are called antagonistic opinions. Extremes meet and act together.

There are those in the country, who profess, in their own words, even to hate the Constitution, because it tolerates, in the Southern States, the institutions existing therein; and there are others, who profess to hate it, and do hate it, because it does not better sustain these institutions. These opposite classes meet, and shake hands together and say, "Let us see what we can do, to accomplish our common end. Give us dissolution, revolution, secession, anarchy, and then let us have a general scramble for our separate objects." Now, the friends of the Constitution must rally and unite. They must forget the things which are behind, and act, with immovable firmness, like a band of brothers, with moderation and conciliation; forgetting past disagreements, and looking only to the great ob-

ject set before them, the preservation of the Constitution, bequeathed to them by their ancestors. They must gird up their loins for the work. It is a duty which they owe to these ancestors, and to the generations which are to succeed them.

Gentlemen, I give my confidence, my countenance, my heart and hand, my entire co-operation to all good men, without reference to the past, or pledge for the future, who are willing to stand by the Constitution.

I will quarrel with no man about past differences, I will reproach no one, but only say, that we stand together here in a most interesting period of our history, with the same general love of country, the same veneration for ancestry, and the same regard for posterity : and let us act in that spirit of union, which actuated our ancestors, when they framed the institutions which it is ours to preserve. But I will not carry my toleration so far, as to justify, in the slightest degree, any defection from that great and absolutely essential point, the preservation of the Union ; and, I think, every man should make his sentiments known on this point. For myself I have no hesitation, and cannot act with those who have. Other questions, questions of policy, are subordinate. This is paramount. Every man, who is for the Union, should come out boldly and say so, without condition or hypothesis, without ifs, and ands, and buts. What Cicero says on another occasion, is fully applicable to this : “ *denique inscriptum sit, patres conscripti, in fronte uniuscujusque civis, quod de republica sentiat.*” Let every man bear inscribed on his forehead, what are his sentiments concerning the republic. There are persons weak enough, foolish enough, to think and to say, that if the Constitution, which holds

these States together, should be broken up, there would be found some other and some better chain of connection. This is rash! This is rash! I no more believe it possible, that, if this Union be dissolved, held together as it now is by the Constitution, especially as I look on these thirty-one States, with their various institutions, spreading over so vast a country, with such varieties of climate:—I say, I no more believe it possible, that this Union, should it once be dissolved, could ever again be re-formed, and all the States re-associated, than I believe it possible, that, if, by the fiat of Almighty power, the law of gravitation should be abolished, and the orbs, which compose the Universe, should rush into illimitable space, jostling against each other, they could be brought back, and re-adjusted into harmony by any new principle of attraction. I hardly know, whether the manner of our political death would be an aggravation, or an alleviation of our fate. We shall die no lingering death. We shall fall victims to neither war, pestilence, nor famine. An earthquake would shake the foundations of the globe, pull down the pillars of heaven, and bury us at once in endless darkness. Such may be the fate of this country and its institutions. May I never live, to see that day! May I not survive to hear any apocalyptic angel, crying through the heavens, with such a voice as announced the fall of Babylon, *"Ἐπεσεν, ἔπεσεν, ἡ Ἀμερικὴ ἡ μεγάλη, καὶ ἐγένετο κατοικητήριον δαιμόνων καὶ φυλακὴ παντὸς πνεύματος ἀκαθάρτου.*

Gentlemen, inspiring auspices, this day, surround us and cheer us. It is the anniversary of the birth of Washington. We should know this, even if we had lost our calendars, for we should be reminded of it by

the shouts of joy and gladness. The whole atmosphere is redolent of his name ; hills and forests, rocks and rivers, echo and re-echo his praises. All the good, whether learned or unlearned, high or low, rich or poor, feel, this day, that there is one treasure common to them all, and that is the fame and character of Washington. They recount his deeds, ponder over his principles and teachings, and resolve, to be more and more guided by them in the future. To the old and the young, to all born in the land, and to all, whose love of liberty has brought them from foreign shores, to make this the home of their adoption, the name of Washington is this day an exhilarating theme. Americans by birth are proud of his character, and exiles from foreign shores are eager, to participate in admiration of him ; and it is true that he is, this day, here, everywhere, all the world over, more an object of love and regard, than on any day since his birth.

Gentlemen, on Washington's principles, and under the guidance of his example, will we and our children uphold the Constitution. Under his military leadership, our fathers conquered ; and under the outspread banner of his political and constitutional principles, will we also conquer. To that standard, we shall adhere, and uphold it, through evil report and through good report. We will meet danger, we will meet death, if they come, in its protection ; and we will struggle on, in daylight and in darkness, aye, in the thickest darkness, with all the storms which it may bring with it, till,

"Danger's troubled night is o'er,
And the star of Peace return."

Mr. WEBSTER having concluded the reading of the Address, Chief Justice JONES rose, and addressed the chair as follows :

Sir,—I ask to offer a resolution, tendering to our distinguished guest our acknowledgements for his able, eloquent and most interesting address to the Historical Society at the anniversary meeting of the institution.

“Resolved, That the thanks of the Society be presented to the Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER for the very able address delivered by him this evening, and that a copy be requested for the use of the Society.”

In presenting this resolution, I take occasion, Mr. President and fellow members of the Society, with the concurrence, I feel assured, of you all, to express the high gratification which that masterly address has afforded us ; and our deep sense of the obligation we are under to the gifted orator for his compliance with our request at so much inconvenience to himself ; and for his felicitous fulfilment of his engagement in a manner so worthy of himself, and so complimentary and grateful to us.

The historic page, in its faithful record of former times and past events, embodying the experience of Nations and States and distinguished personages, in all ages and all countries, exhibits an index and a beacon of inestimable value to the living races of man, pointing with unerring truth and certainty, to future events as indicated by the signs of the times seen in the passing occurrences of the day ; to that monitor we may at all times, if well versed in the lesson it teaches, and only observant of their bearings upon the living scenes around us, confidently appeal for the direction of our course, and in its counsels safely confide. Its lessons should be familiar to all, and neglected or unheeded by none. With these views of the importance of historical pursuits, and for the furtherance of them in our own country, this Institution was established by its founders, and while they and their associates had for their grand object the collection of materials for the annals of the confederated Republic, to which we belong, their more immediate purpose has been to discover, collect and preserve the materials and elements for a full and complete history of their own State ; for the accomplishment of that purpose, it has been the aim and the study of the Society to trace and explore the origin, character, customs, languages and traditions of the tribes of aboriginal inhabitants who occupied these extensive regions when first discovered by European adventurers ; the tribes or people of higher antiquity who preceded them in that occupancy ; and the advent

and progress of those early settlers who came from the father-land to these shores, then a wilderness where the wild beasts of the forest and the untutored red man were wont to roam, now the home of a race whose industry and peaceful arts have made it indeed to blossom as the rose. These races, and more especially the red man of the forest, peculiar to this Western World, and of such marked variances from other races in personal lineaments, and in pursuits and habits, and withal so inveterately averse to change, early invited, and have constantly commanded the attentive interest and research of the Historical Society. And as connected with these researches, the documentary and monumental remembrances, and the relics and antiquities found in the various sections of our State and country, calculated to throw light upon the obscurity of former times, have been carefully and industriously investigated, and full and accurate accounts and descriptions of them, and sometimes the relics themselves, added to the rich and valuable collection of the Society.

The Institution assiduously engaged in these and other similar pursuits, keeping its leading objects and purposes constantly in view, and its members actively uniting in its operations, has steadily advanced in its course, overcoming all the difficulties which beset it in its earlier days, and in less than half a century has grown up from a private association of a few literary friends, and with narrow means, into an incorporated Society, widely extended in its operations and numbers, and it has now taken and maintains a proud rank among the literary institutions of the country. In every stage of its progress, the countenance, aid, and co-operation of literary and liberal men, in our own and our sister States, and in foreign countries, have contributed largely to its success. Meanwhile, the interesting and instructive addresses of eminent men at our anniversary meetings have conduced powerfully to encourage and animate us in our pursuits, to nerve our energies, and to impel us to a continued onward course. And, Sir, I may with truthfulness and pride, claim for this occasion, that no voice of greater charm or more effective influence and deep abiding interest for us and our cause, has ever met our ears than that which we have this day heard within these walls. No man better knows the value of history, or can more fully appreciate its benefits, than the eminent Statesman who has on this occasion unfolded to us so much of its merits and so many of its beauties. The master mind at the helm of the ship of state, who is to navigate her in her course on the ocean water of the great political community of nations, wisely takes the lights of history for his guide. In all the emergencies that may arise with that light for his government and guide, he steadily pursues his own well considered course, avoiding as well the conflicts and collisions, as the entangling alliances of other states, observing good faith and cultivating





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